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ABSTRACT

This document is a tour guide to the historical features of the seaports of Black Rock and Southport in the town of Fairfield, Connecticut. It is designed to acquaint visitors and residents with the stages of development that shaped both ports and the way that Fairfield has evolved through wars, depressions, and periods of prosperity over the centuries. From Black Rock and Southport, both natural harbors, goods and produce were shipped in early colonial days. Black Rock was a major West Indies trading port and shipbuilding center, while Southport was the base for a market fleet and a residence for wealthy shipowners. Later, during the Victorian era, these areas became summer resorts, and still later became mostly residential communities. The history of Black Rock is traced from its beginning in 1644 through the hey-days of its West Indies trade, 1760 to 1815. Its declining period between 1865 and 1900 is discussed, followed by a report of the port's evolution into a residential community during the 20th century. Southport contains some of the finest architecture and streetscapes design produced in early America. From its beginnings Southport had a simple village atmosphere, mainly due to its residents' successful prevention of the development of a manufacturing economy. The history of Southport is traced from its origins as a farm community in 1661 through 1800. From 1800 to 1854 it was a center for coast trading, and then gradually evolved more and more to a residential area. Throughout the document existing historical landmarks are noted. The document also contains numerous maps and photographs. (BC)

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WALKING THROUGH HISTORY

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The Seaports of Black Rock and Southport

written by

Charles Brilvitch

Fairfield Historical Society 2

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WALKING THROUGH HISTORY

Offered by the Fairfield Historical Society, WALKING THROUGH HISTORY: THE SEAPORTS OF BLACK ROCK AND SOUTHPORT focuses on two areas with a wealth of historical fabric. The booklet, together with escorted tours during October, 1977, constitute the heart of a program designed for the public.

In July of 1976 when I formed the budding ideas for WALKING THROUGH HISTORY, I believed it had an exciting potential. I was also convinced that success would depend upon the work and enthusiasm of great numbers of volunteers.

Fortunately the Bridgeport-Fairfield area is rich in able people with a sympathy for local history. The work of such volunteers gave form and substance to WALKING THROUGH HISTORY. I cannot say how much I appreciated their generosity, patience, good humor and intelligence in over a year of planning and working. Their efforts, together with the financial support from NEH and local institutions, make it possible to present an outstanding historical program.

I hope many people are attracted to WALKING THROUGH HISTORY. If they see historical choices and changes in Southport and Black Rock from settlement to the present, perhaps they can better appreciate the development of their neighborhoods and areas, no matter how recent.

Elizabeth Johnson
August, 1977

30
BLACK ROCK
Town of Fairfield
Scale 20 Rods to the Inch
J. S. Wyman
Vine Yard
Plant H
Barn
House
Barn
Corn House
Ice House
Factory
Office
MAPLE SIDE
Orchard
Orange H
Wks
Coach
J. Couch
AVE
B. Smith
Coal Yard
Coal
Dan'l Trubee
FAIR FIELD
Jas Couch
J. B.
L. Iron
CHURCH
H. Fredricks
H. Gould
E. B. Spencer
T. H. Seeley
C. Hayward
Y. Jones
C. H. Allen
D. Lockwood
G. A. Gould
Congl. Ch.
J. B.
E. Walker
D. Burroughs
Mrs Wilson
W. Wheeler
Capt. J. P. Britton
ST.
WHEELER
Jas Couch
L. Burr
BLACK ROCK
T. L. Burr
BARTRAM
AVE
F. D. Ellsworth
T. B. Bartram
Mrs Brewster
Mrs L. Hall
D. Smith
Student
THE COVE
Red Perry
A. Sherwood
MAIN
ST.
Mrs Brewster
Mrs Hotchkiss
J. Burdick
R. F. W.
K. Nichols
Mrs Brewster
AVE
G. Sherman
W. B. Howes
J. Burdram
R. R.
Coal
A. Smith
E. Penfield
ELM
ST.
GROVERS
WATER
ST.
WATER SIDE
E. Penfield
BLACK ROCK HARBOR

From the time of its first settlement to the onset of 20th century suburbanization, Fairfield was an agricultural community, dependent upon the soil for its prosperity and upon the sea for its contact with the outside world. Two natural ports, Black Rock and Southport, were equidistant from the town center. Both shipped goods and produce from earliest times, and both had grown from sparsely settled outposts into respectable villages by the close of the 18th century. In the early 19th century each had moments of glory, Black Rock as a major West Indies trading port and shipbuilding center and Southport as the base for a market boat fleet and a residence for wealthy shipowners. Both places faded into summer resorts in the Victorian era and later became almost exclusively residential.

This guide is designed to acquaint visitors and residents with the stages of development that shaped both ports and the way that Fairfield has evolved through wars, depressions and periods of prosperity over the centuries. The tours are arranged in chronological sequence to enable the participant to grasp the fine points of history through tangible remnants of past eras.

Numbers preceding addresses refer to the maps in the back of this guide.

BLACK ROCK

Black Rock once reigned as the chief seaport of the influential town of Fairfield. Shipping activity there was the source of much of the community's prosperity. It remains today more than just another Bridgeport neighborhood, possessing a sense of tradition rooted in a colorful past and a community spirit that sets it apart from other sections. The historic houses in the old center, the pleasant tree-lined blocks of early 20th century developments, and the unsurpassed oceanfront drive along Eames Blvd. continue to make Black Rock a most attractive place to visit.

The harbor has always been the focus of the community. It is of unusual natural depth. In the 17th and 18th centuries it was the only Connecticut port except New London that could accommodate ships of 300 to 400 tons. By contrast, the largest ships able to navigate the

Connecticut River to Hartford and Wethersfield were 30 to 40 tons. Black Rock was one of the few places in the Connecticut colony settled exclusively as a trading center, and its population until the close of the 19th century consisted primarily of seafaring families.

At the beginning of the 20th century, commerce moved away from the once-busy harbor front, but at the same time urbanization was spreading to Black Rock. The wholesale destruction of the historic framework that occurred in other old Bridgeport neighborhoods was prevented by the high quality of the new residential developments coupled with a heightened appreciation of old architecture. What remains today is always something of a surprise to the uninitiated: 17th and 18th century homesteads surrounded by World War I era two-family houses; a largely intact wharf district with storehouses that antedate the War of 1812; a carefully laid out section of Greek Revival houses from the 1830s and '40s; and some especially fine examples of early Victorian Italian villas built in the 1850s.

BEGINNINGS 1644 - 1760

The point of land at the foot of Brewster Street has never fulfilled its potential as the nucleus of a mercantile city. Yet its natural advantages—a situation at the head of a deep harbor protected by Fayerweather Island, a high elevation along a coastline that was predominantly low and marshy, and an abundance of natural millsites in the surrounding countryside—surely must have attracted notice during the era of settlement of this region, and may have influenced Roger Ludlowe's selection of Fairfield as the site for his town in 1639.

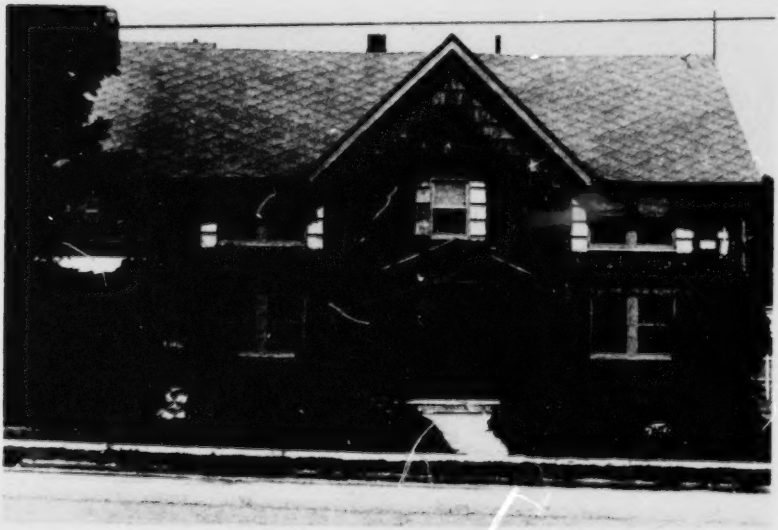
Black Rock (at first known as "Shipharbor") remained unoccupied until 1644. In that year discord broke out among the Puritan congregation in Concord, Massachusetts, and the dissenters decided to emigrate to Connecticut. They settled for the most part along the "Line Highway" (now Park Avenue) that separated Fairfield and Stratford, a settlement that became known as "Stratfield."

One among their number, Thomas Wheeler, apparently felt that the advantages of a good trading location outweighed the disadvantages of isolation. He selected a two and a half-acre point of land between the Harbor and Brewster's Cove for his house lot and became Black Rock's first English settler. Tradition states that he built a stone house with a flat roof which mounted two defending cannons—one aimed out the Harbor for fear of attack from the Dutch at New Amsterdam; the other

aimed at the Indian fort located on a salt water inlet near the present day intersection of Fairfield Avenue and Ellsworth Street.

Thomas Wheeler died in 1654, and for the next century Black Rock was almost solely the holding of his children and grandchildren. Three homesteads were eventually erected along Brewster Street in a medieval style, with steep gable roofs and small leaded-glass casement windows.

John Wheeler, son of Thomas, was counted among the three or four wealthiest men in late 17th century Connecticut and represented Fairfield in the colonial legislature. The town granted him liberty to erect a "wharf in the harbor at the blacke rocke" in 1676, the first recorded usage of the name. It is possible that he lived in the house still standing at 268 Brewster Street.



COURTESY OF FELIX BURGOS

The John Wheeler House (268 Brewster St.) is Black Rock's oldest surviving homestead. Although a date of 1720 has traditionally been ascribed to it, the steep roof pitch, wide interior summer beams, and a pilastered stone chimney top that survived into this century suggest an earlier date.

The Wheelers finished the job of clearing the land started by the Indians, not leaving a single tree that did not bear fruit or serve some other useful purpose. The land between Burr Creek and Grovers Hill was used to pasture livestock and to grow crops for barter.

At first produce was shipped to nearby market towns such as New Haven and New London to trade for foreign and finished goods. Sometime before 1700 the Wheelers started Black Rock's profitable trade with the West Indies. Non-perishable produce—cornmeal, salt beef, timber—was exchanged for sugar, salt, rum, molasses, and, in all probability, slaves. But still the port remained a family operation used mostly by local farmers. There were in fact three other competing "ports" just within the boundaries of Fairfield at Ash Creek and the Mill and Saugatuck Rivers. Black Rock would have to wait for more expansive times to realize its full potential.

WEST INDIES PORT 1760 - 1815

Black Rock's course of development changed abruptly around 1760. The reasons are unclear, but within a decade three major commercial wharves had supplanted the old landing place at the point, eight or ten new houses had joined the three old Wheeler homesteads, roads were laid out, and shipbuilding had become a major occupation. This growth reflected the importance of Fairfield, which had a population of about 4500 and was one of the wealthiest towns per capita in colonial Connecticut.

The Kate Moore House, a fine example of early 19th century Federal period architecture, stood across the street from the Hezekiah Osborn House. It was demolished around 1930.

Perhaps the improvements were precipitated by the construction of the Penfield tide mill on Ash Creek in 1750. In 1753 the town proposed a bridge across the creek (the remains of it are still visible at the foot of Balmforth St.) which shortened considerably the distance to Black Rock. Grovers Ave., which prior to this time had been a cartway to pastures on Grovers Hill, became a full scale highway to connect with the new bridge.

Enterprising David Wheeler III realized the new potential of his family's lands. He laid out house lots in the vicinity of Beacon Street for sea captains and enticed thirteen prominent Fairfield citizens to put up money for a new wharf. Thus in 1767 Middle Wharf joined Squire's Wharf to the south (1760) and the new Upper Wharf to the north (1762) and lot sales were assured. For the first time the Wheeler family shared control of the port of Black Rock.

The Revolutionary War brought increased activity into the community. As the base for several successful privateers, Black Rock was considered important enough to warrant the construction of a fort at the entrance to the Harbor, and a large cannon was secured to guard the Upper Wharf. Captain Caleb Brewster used the port as the point of embarkation for his whaleboats on spy missions to Long Island, a key link in the famous "Culper Spy Ring."

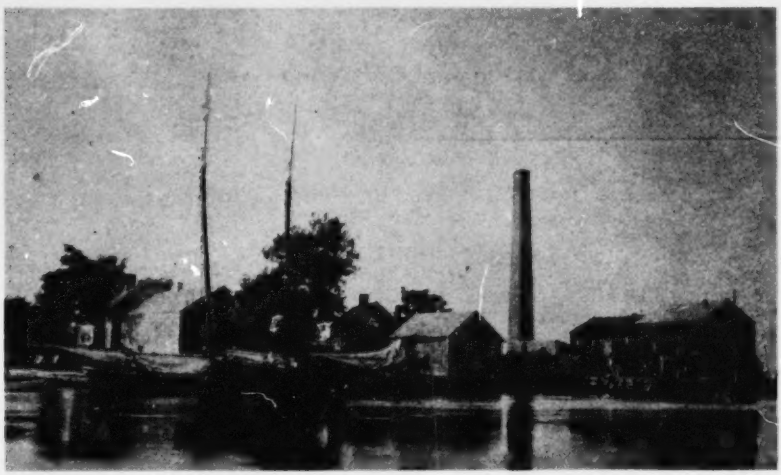
The British sailed past the hamlet on their way to burn Fairfield in 1779, after being fired on from the Black Rock fort. William Wheeler, a schoolmaster who kept a journal of Black Rock happenings between Revolutionary times and the 1840s, was inland tending cattle on Toilsome Hill when he observed the British landing. He noted "Black Rock people assembled on Grovers Hill . . . You might from Black Rock see the fire shine through the windows & presently the fire on the outside . . . Isaac Jarvis commanded at the battery. Had he been a coward, ten more houses would have been burnt: Squire's, Burr's, Silliman's, Holburton's, Fowler's, Chauncey's, Widow Wheeler's, Ichabod Wheeler's, Bartram's." This was probably the entire population of the village at the time.

A short depression followed the war, after which Black Rock began to boom. Timothy Dwight, Yale president, observed in the first years of the nineteenth century that "Not withstanding the excellence of the harbor and the convenience which it furnishes for commerce, Black Rock has long been neglected . . . Business is now commencing . . . with a fair promise of success."

Business "commenced" at the end of Brewster Street, where storehouses went up one by one in a new commercial center that soon attracted farmers from as far away as forty miles. Here also were the general store, and the blacksmith shop. William Wheeler noted in his journal in April, 1803, that "We now expect that Black Rock will flourish as a place of trade, as there are 6 stores now built & 5 wharves & 4 vessels . . . 6 families, 15 dwelling houses & 54 inhabitants . . . exclusive of about 20 boarders." The reason for the large number of boarders is suggested by an entry in December, 1803, which states "Moved to my house Lewis Goodsell & family to build a vessell."

Across the street from the wharves and storehouses merchants built elegant Federal style houses (all were demolished or burned by 1960). The government built a lighthouse station in the Harbor in 1808, and in 1812 Black Rock Turnpike was laid out to New Milford in an effort to draw business from that fertile section of the Housatonic Valley. Fortunes were also made in the West Indies and new China trade.

Fortunes declined with the trade embargoes of the early 1800s and the disastrous War of 1812. Thereafter Bridgeport usurped Black Rock's place as the new center of Fairfield County commerce.



The old Black Rock wharves at the foot of Brewster St. as they appeared in the latter part of the 19th century.

The same view in the 1950's.

Stopping Point:

UPPER WHARVES, foot of Brewster St. This was the commercial center of old Black Rock, which ranked in the three top trading ports in the state in the post-Revolutionary period. Wharves had been constructed here as early as the 17th century, but most of what remains today is the result of a town improvement program in 1802. At that time the road was laid out in its present form, and three stone piers were built to serve six flourishing stores. Market boats and West India sloops visited the Harbor and their trade contributed a large share of the prosperity of Fairfield.

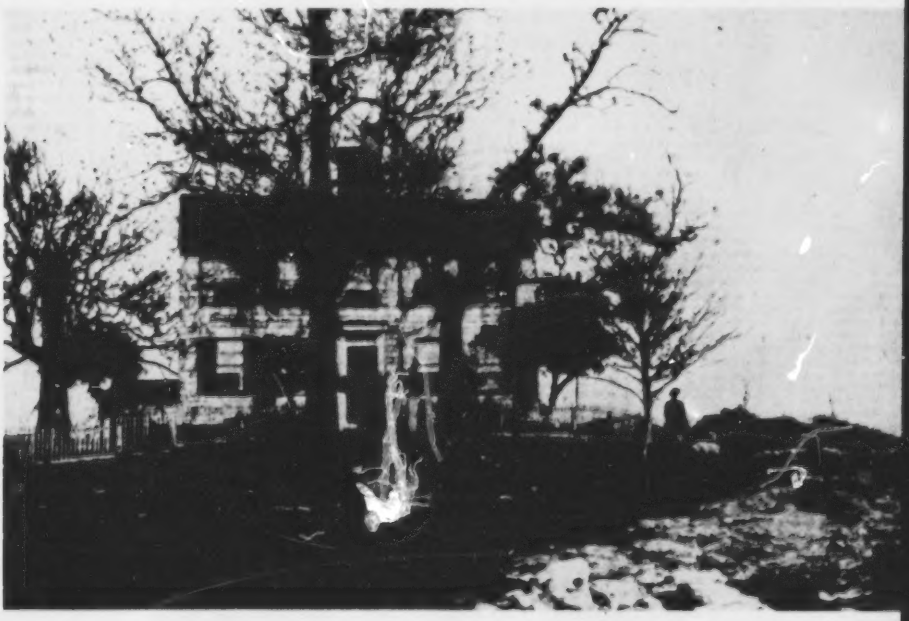
B1. PORT 5 YACHT CLUB (circa 1807), 75 Brewster St. This former storehouse, now considerably remodeled, was built by Joseph Bulkley and his son Uriah. Originally it was a simple barn-like structure with few windows. Uriah Bulkley's house stood next door on the site of the present condominiums. It was moved to 89 Grovers Ave. on Grovers Hill in the 1880s.

B2. FAYERWEATHER YACHT CLUB (1772), 51 Brewster St. This is Black Rock's oldest remaining storehouse. It was built as a joint venture by Samuel Smedley and Samuel Sturges, two prominent Fairfield Revolutionary patriots. The gable roof portion with the dormer windows is the original structure.

B3. HEZEKIAH OSBORN HOUSE (1801), 39 Brewster St. Old photographs show that a three-story warehouse was formerly attached to the water side of this house, one of the few left in the old commercial district.

The Hezekiah Osborn House is the only surviving early homestead in the old wharf district. Photographed here in 1939.

The David Penfield House, erected in 1768, stood at the northwest corner of Beacon St. and Seabright Ave. until its destruction by fire in 1875.



B4. WOLCOTT CHAUNCEY HOUSE (1769), 150 Seabright Ave. This house is a valuable survivor of a lower class 18th century dwelling. Most other examples disappeared during the 19th century when colonial architecture was held in low esteem. An article in the *Bridgeport Standard* of 6 September 1875, describing the destruction by fire of the adjacent David Penfield house, stated "... we have heard no expressions of regret on account of the fire which was doubtless the work of an incendiary. No alarm was given, and but few of the citizens gathered to witness the conflagration. No attempt was made to stay the progress of the flames. The property belonged to Mr. George A. Wells, and we understand he is congratulating himself upon the disposition of it." The Chauncey House was the birthplace of Commodore Isaac Chauncey, American forces commander on the Great Lakes in the War of 1812.

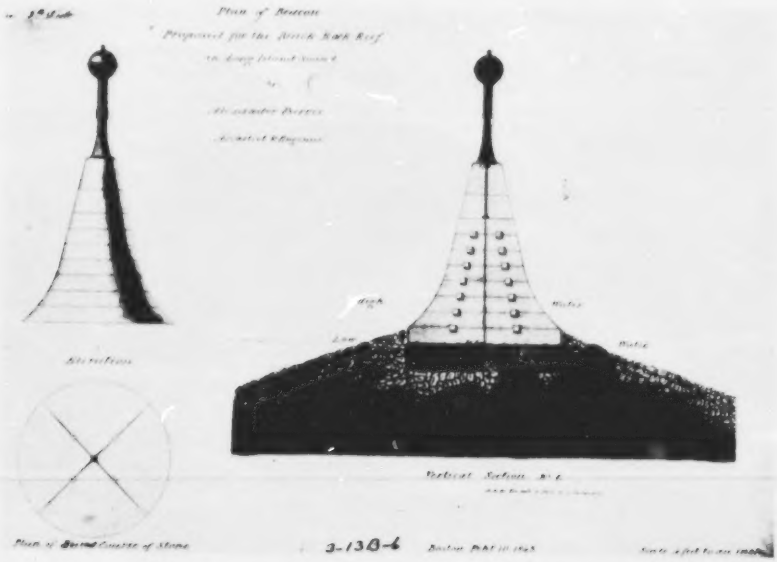
LONG ISLAND SOUND PORT 1815 - 1845

Black Rock became a self-contained backwater area after the War of 1812. Building activity almost completely ceased for twenty years, and the Wheeler journal continually makes mention of neighbors and friends moving west or to more promising commercial centers. There were various reasons for the decline of the port, most of which can be tied to the emergence of neighboring Bridgeport and Southport.

Disastrous hurricanes in 1811 and 1821 proved that the lack of adequate protection in Black Rock Harbor could bring calamity. Wheeler recorded on 3 September 1821 that "Every vessel went ashore in this harbor ... the Lighthouse laid flat." Bridgeport and Southport harbors, although shallow, were almost completely landlocked and offered far greater shelter in a storm.

West Indies produce, the mainstay of Black Rock's trade, fell sharply in price at this time. Many small shippers were wiped out. Perhaps the final blow came with the opening of the Erie Canal, when cheap Western corn whiskey flooded Eastern markets and replaced West Indian rum as the favorite drink.

Architectural evidence shows that Black Rock blossomed again in the 1830s, but on a lesser scale. Alanson Allen moved here from Westport in 1827 and purchased the old John Wheeler homestead (268 Brewster St.) and surrounding acreage. Soon afterwards his daughter Elizabeth married David Smith, a housewright from Greenfield Hill. Smith laid out "Smith's Lane" (now Calderwood Court) across the street from his father-in-law's house.

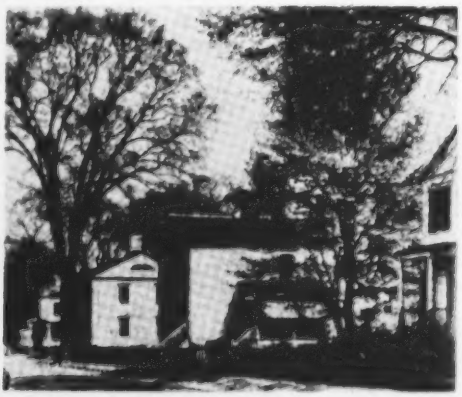


The Fayerweather Island lighthouse station was established by the government in Black Rock Harbor in 1807. Above is a rejected 1843 plan for rebuilding the structure by Alexander Parris, architect of Boston's Quincy Market. Below is the lighthouse standing today, completed in 1847.

COURTESY OF THE BLACK ROCK CIVIC AND BUSINESS MEN'S CLUB, INC.

Between 1838 and 1843, Smith built eight dwellings and a carriage manufactory here, all reflecting a transitional Federal-Greek Revival style. The highlight of this development was the "classical composition" of three houses facing Brewster St. Smith's own house was in the middle, a center-entranced side gable structure with twin chimneys (259-61 Brewster St.). It was flanked by two temple-fronted houses with opposite side entrances. To the left, the Captain Thomas Ransom house (237 Brewster St.) reflects the proportioning of the Parthenon, while to the right the George Palmer house (283 Brewster St.) shows the influence of the Maison Carré in Nimes, France. Even the original window sash (six-over-six pane in the Ransom and Palmer houses and twelve-over-twelve in Smith's) shows a careful attention to detail and grouping. These houses taken together demonstrate the 19th century ideal of good architecture, leading the eye from the lower left side to the upper right. While building individual houses for profit, Smith was also achieving a harmonious streetscape.

The ship chandlery and carriage industries attracted some new people to the village during this period, but no major expansion occurred at this time.



The Brewster St. front of David Smith's Greek Revival development as it appeared in 1934.

Stopping Point:

CALDERWOOD COURT DEVELOPMENT. At its inception in the 1830s this street was carefully planned as an integrated village center. Along its short length were multi-family housing, a school and a factory. Upper-class houses faced Brewster St. Buildings originally were whitewashed and yellowed as they aged; blinds were painted French green that aged to Persian blue. Shade trees, mostly elms and sycamores, were

planted for the first time along the dusty roads to relieve the starkness. The elongated attic fan windows seen in this area were probably the builder's trademark.

B5. CARRIAGE FACTORY (1830) 5-7 Calderwood Court. Built by Captain Thomas Ransom, a local merchant, this building represents one of the first attempts to bring manufacturing into Black Rock. Carriages were shipped from here to New York and the West Indies. The factory was converted into a dwelling about 1870.

B6. WILLIAM BOUTON HOUSE (1838) 4 Calderwood Court. This typical middle-class house was the first to be erected in the new development.

B7. CAPTAIN THOMAS RANSOM HOUSE (1839) 207 Brewster St. This elegant Grecian-style home was built for a prominent businessman who founded the private "Select School" on Calderwood Court.

B8. DAVID SMITH HOUSE (1843) 259-61 Brewster St. This house is thought to be the home of the housewright who designed and built the other structures listed in this section.

B9. GEORGE PALMER HOUSE (1840) 283 Brewster St. Built for a Black Rock oysterman, the unusually high basement of this full-pedimented Greek Revival house was probably used to store oysters for shipping by packet boat to New York.

The George Palmer House.

COURTESY OF FELIX BURGOS

B10. BLACK ROCK SCHOOL (opened October, 1841) 272 Brewster St. Originally located at the corner of Grovers Ave., this building was replaced as a school by a larger Victorian structure around 1865. It served as an auxiliary school for a number of years before it was moved to its present site and used as a washhouse for a bottling works. It was converted into a dwelling in the 1920s.

The David Lockwood House (191 Ellsworth St.) was built by the village shoe maker in 1837.

Capt. John Brittin, a shipyard owner, built this Grecian style house (140 Ellsworth St.) in 1836. It was photographed about 1870 before Victorian additions were made.

SHIPBUILDING CENTER 1845 - 1865

Major developments came to Black Rock in the late 1840s. The village forgot its dreams of regaining lost shipping commerce or rivaling Bridgeport as a manufacturing center and concentrated on what it knew best: shipbuilding.

The stern of the *Charles Cooper* as it appears today.

Ad from the Nov. 14th, 1856 issue of the Bridgeport Republican Farmer.

☞ The Fifth Term of the STRATFORD High School, will commence on Wednesday, Nov. 12. This institution is very ably conducted, and is now in a very flourishing condition. The principals are both young men of energy, and leave nothing undone that will tend to aid their pupils in their studies.

☞ What is the matter with the gas?—Cannot a better quality be afforded for the price that is asked? If not, we recommend every one who put gas pipes in their houses hereafter to have duplicate burners. Then they can light one to see the flame of the other.

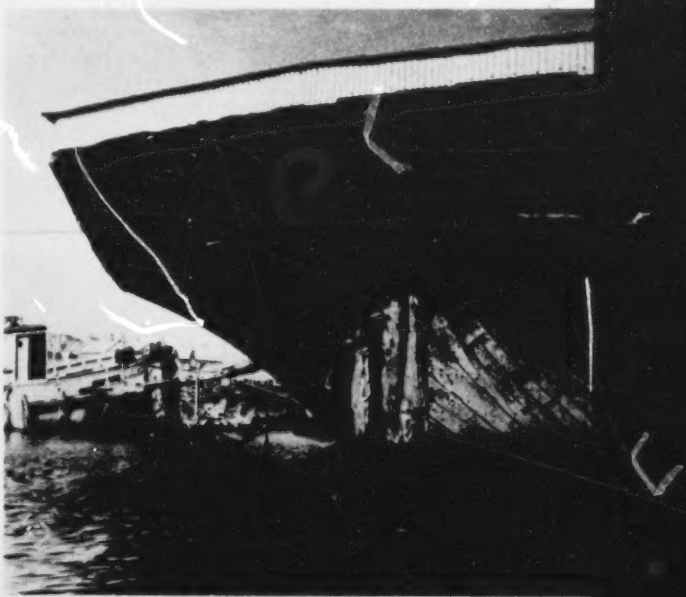
☞ A Boston Yankee, named John E. Gowan, has contracted with the Emperor of Russia to raise the fifty-two ships of war sunk in the harbor of Sebastopol. Mr. G., is the man who raised the U. S. Steamer Missouri, sunk in the harbor of Gibraltar.

☞ A fine ship, called the Charles Cooper, was launched in good style, this forenoon, at Hall's Ship Yard, in Black Rock. She measures about ten hundred tons, and is designed for the Antwerp trade.

☞ The Fremonters in New Haven got up a spurious Democratic ticket, with the names of the Fremont Electors on it, and succeeded in getting many of them off upon Democratic voters.

☞ Philo Hawley, Esq., of Easton, has sent us a couple of the handsomest beets we have seen for a long time—we doubt if any one can show us a better looking pair.

☞ Greeley is out in a long article against Tom Benton, the father of Jessie. 'Cause why? Tom said Fremont was not fit for President.



COURTESY OF THE SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM

The *Charles Cooper*, built at the Black Rock shipyard of Capt. William Hall, is the sole remaining example of the once extensive North Atlantic packet fleet. Now at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, it has been acquired by the South Street Seaport Museum for eventual restoration.

Shipyards had been in existence in Black Rock for close to a century—Ichabod Wheeler's in the 18th century had been succeeded by Captain Daniel Wilson's in the early 19th. With the growing demand both for large ships and canal boats, a specialized industry grew up along lower Brewster St., and by 1850 four yards were in operation. These were owned by Captain John Brittin, Verdine Ellsworth, Sturges & Clearman, and Elizabeth Wilson (an apparent successor to Captain Daniel).

Again the Wheeler family stood ready to cash in on the demand for houselots carved from family holdings. Ellsworth St. (first called simply "the new street", later Wheeler St., and after 1849 Church Street) had been cut through by the town as early as 1802, but the parcelling of lots did not begin until 1836. In the first few years William Wheeler sold a few half-acre lots to home-builders such as Capt. John Brittin, but most were sold to speculators for prices between $50 and $100. Many of these were resold as the village grew in the 1840s and '50s for $150 to $500.

In 1849 Black Rock built its own Congregational Church at the corner of Ellsworth St. and Bartram Ave., ending the need for a Sunday trip to Fairfield Center. At about the same time Capt. William Howes moved from Sag Harbor, Long Island, and started a coal yard on Seabright Ave. which brought additional commerce to the village.

Black Rock's second golden age did not really dawn until 1856, however, when Capt. William Hall moved from Maine and bought up all four shipyards. He built an impressive home for himself on Ellsworth St. overlooking his enterprise, and in the four short years before his death turned the village into one of Connecticut's foremost shipbuilding centers. He was succeeded in 1860 by the somewhat less ambitious firm of Hilliard & Rew, which later became Rew & Walker. The shipyard degenerated during the Civil War, and the business afterwards concentrated solely on chandlery.

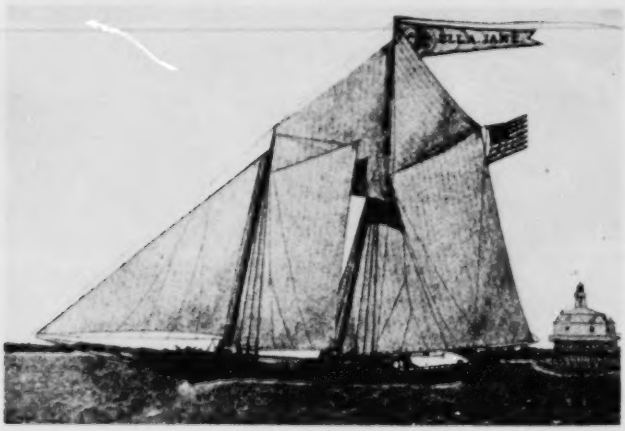
Stopping Point:

LOWER ELLSWORTH ST. This area was built up during one of Black Rock's most prosperous periods. The specialized workers who built their homes here could afford to be style conscious, and the early Victorian villas on spacious lots reflected a growing cosmopolitan taste. Grounds were well landscaped so that buildings appeared to be continuations of the natural environment. This effect was heightened by the original "earth tone" paint colors of the houses.

B11. WILLIAM WHEELER BOUNDSTONE (1647), corner Brewster and Ellsworth Sts. This stone marked the southern boundary of William Wheeler's development of Ellsworth St. house-lots.

B12. CAPTAIN WILLIAM HALL HOUSE (1856), 87 Ellsworth St. The village showplace of the ante-bellum period, this Italianate-Gothic mansion was built by the owner of a shipyard complex. Its design, probably influenced by a plan published in A. J. Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses*, an early builders' handbook, is similar to houses on Fairfield's Old Post Road.

The schooner *Ella Jane* was the fastest packet boat on the Sound. The pennant at the masthead was won in a race. It was owned by Capt. Charles Allen, who built his homestead at 213 Ellsworth St. about 1854.



A GOOD CHANCE TO SEE THE RACE.

THE commodious schooner Ella Jane, Capt. Allen, will leave her dock, at the foot of State Street, at 10½ A. M., and will follow the boats over the whole course, giving a full view of the whole Boat Race. Tickets, 50 cents. oc5 1d*

B13. CAPTAIN CHARLES ALLEN and ISAAC JONES HOUSES (circa 1854), 213 and 227 Ellsworth St. These Italianate houses were originally identical in appearance (the Jones house was remodeled around 1910). Wrap-around porches once complemented the floor-to-ceiling parlor windows.

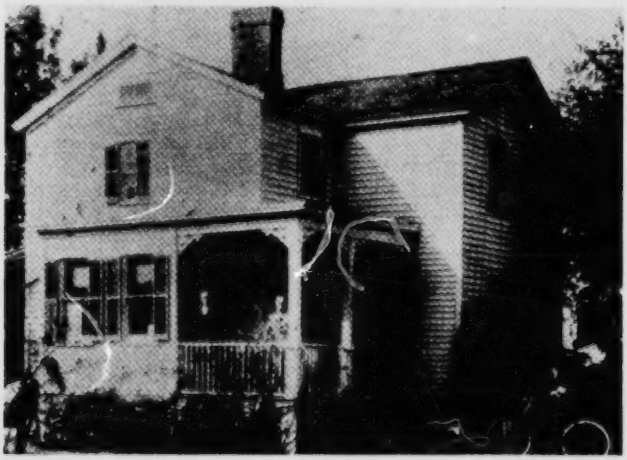
B14. STURGES SEELEY HOUSE (circa 1851), 259 Ellsworth St. This modest Early Victorian cottage was built by a ship's carpenter and still remains in the hands of his descendants.

B15. ELIPHALET WALKER HOUSE (circa 1855), 250 Ellsworth St. Built for a shipyard and marine railway owner, this flamboyant Italianate house has suffered few alterations over the years. While no larger than contemporary "Box Victorian" houses nearby, the exceptional design of this one reveals the prosperity of its original occupant.

COURTESY OF FELIX BURGOS

Eliphalet Walker's house, built around 1855, remains the village's most splendid example of the Italian Villa style.

Sturges Seeley built his house across from Eliphalet Walker shortly after he purchased the lot in 1851.



B16. OLIVER BURR HOUSE (circa 1853), 228 Ellsworth St. First owned by a carpenter, this middle-class Early Victorian house retains a typically ornate veranda which adds contrast to the otherwise plain façade.

The Oliver Burr House was built by a village housewright in 1854.

PERIOD OF DECLINE 1865 - 1900

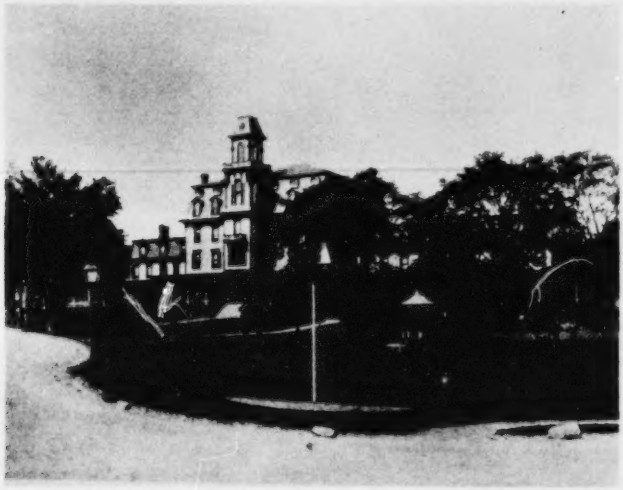
Black Rock suffered a period of decline after the Civil War. The once proud shipyards were reduced to boat hauling and repair yards; the stores that had managed to stay in business were finally closed. Black Rock simply could not compete in an age of iron ships.

Bridgeport was now the undisputed hub of the region. Its excellent railroad connections and newly deepened harbor were attracting new industries by the score, and lands which could be taxed by the city were needed for expansion. In 1870 Bridgeport petitioned the State Legislature to cede the section of the town of Fairfield lying between Park Ave. and Ash Creek. Part of this section had been known as "Sneaktown" because the residents (including P. T. Barnum) received most municipal services from Bridgeport but paid low taxes to Fairfield.

It was with only slight reluctance that Black Rock joined the city. Old families had been dying off and were being replaced by German and Irish laborers in need of cheap living accommodations. Chances for an-

other independent revival appeared slim. Several once-prominent members of the community took their own lives in the 1870s, including Albert Burr and Capt. John Brittin, who told family members that he didn't want to "die poor."

But a revival of sorts did start almost immediately. The George Hotel on Grovers Hill, billed as the most elegant along the coast between Newport and New York, was opened in 1876. Village residents obtained employment as groundskeepers and servants, lessening for a time the dependence on Bridgeport for jobs. An influx of wealthy New Yorkers as summer residents also helped the local economy.



The George Hotel, built on Grovers Hill in 1876, attracted affluent summer visitors to the village.

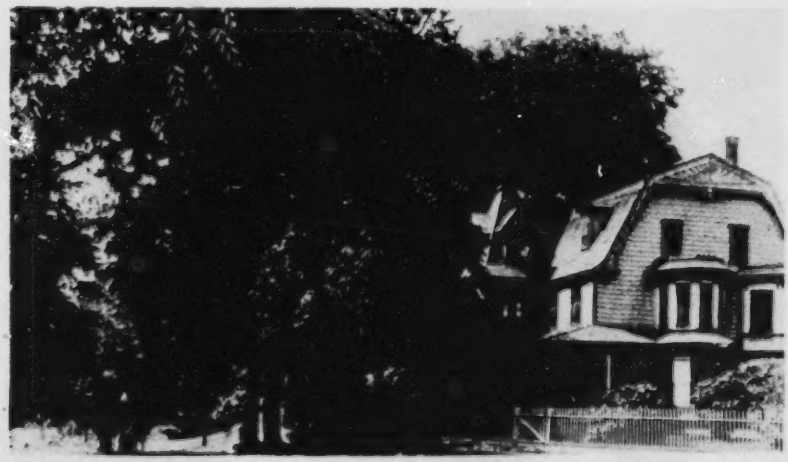
A combination turpentine factory-acid works was built on the site of the old shipyards in 1870, but this proved to be a dismal failure almost immediately. By 1877 the *Bridgeport Standard* reported: "The sulfuric acid works having been a drug on the market, it was appropriate that our popular druggist L. F. Curtis, Esq., should buy them as he has and, moreover, as he always sells cheap, it was essential that he should buy them at the cheap price of $8,500, which is cheaper than the dirt of its numerous acres ought to bring."

Another long-standing village industry, a winery on upper Ellsworth St., failed in the '80s when railroads brought in cheap California wines with which it could not compete. For the rest of the 19th century the old village center remained a decadent neighborhood.

Beacon St. looking east from the Capt. Benjamin Penfield House in the late 19th century.

Stopping Point:
CORNER ELLSWORTH and HACKLEY STS. The three houses at the southeast corner were virtually the only ones erected in Black Rock village between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the 20th century. All were probably constructed by the Gould brothers of Black Rock, who were responsible for hundreds of buildings all over Bridgeport. Probably most of their employees were neighbors since almost half the Black Rock names in Bridgeport city directories of this period were listed as carpenters.

Brewster St. looking west showing the Capt. Joseph Bartram House demolished in 1930, a Federal period structure with Victorian additions.



The wharf buildings were in a state of dilapidation by the end of the 19th century.

COURTESY OF FELIX BURGOS

The George Gould House (110 Ellsworth St.), built in 1896, was one of the few Victorian structures built in the village center.

B17. ARTHUR SMITH HOUSE (1893), 118 Ellsworth St. Bridgeport's ubiquitous "shingle-style" house with a corner octagonal tower was built here for the owner of Smith's Express Company. Smith was a Black Rock native who "made good" in downtown Bridgeport and returned to his old neighborhood.

B18. GEORGE GOULD HOUSE (1896), 110 Ellsworth St. Originally owned by an oyster dealer, this house complements but does not overpower the adjacent Smith house by the clever placement of its similar tower.

B19 HENRY BUNCE HOUSE (1893), 34 Hackley St. This "back street" version of the other houses was built for the Bartram family's head gardener.

STREETCAR SUBURB 1900 - 1920

European immigrants moved into Black Rock in full force during the first years of the 20th century. Hungarians and Slovenians spilled over from the crowded West End tenement district seeking a better life. Swedes settled here in especially large numbers, founding Lutheran and Baptist churches and several social clubs. These and other nationalities found employment at the new Bullard Company plant on Ash Creek or the numerous factories that lined the railroad tracks in the West End.

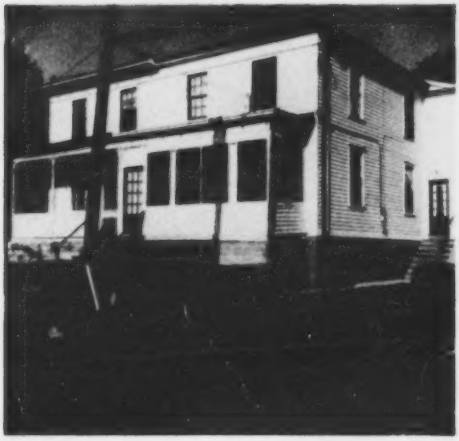
The streetcar brought profound changes to Black Rock. The old center was bypassed, and new businesses were located along the line on Fairfield Ave. The few remaining onion and vegetable farms gave way to building lots for two-family houses. In the years immediately preceding World War I, Bridgeport's population increased by almost 75,000. Al-

though large houses continued to be built on the Point, the old part of Black Rock village was now too accessible to Bridgeport to be useful for anything but high-density housing.

Stopping Point:
HACKLEY ST. The flavor of early 20th century Black Rock permeates this street. The well-appointed Greek Revival houses at either end recall a self-assured past, but those in between suggest a neighborhood of inexpensive building lots further devalued by a proximity to the city dump and gas works and the long distance from downtown.

Two of the houses along this block are earlier structures moved here and remodeled, one (#70) a former auxiliary schoolhouse which had in turn been converted from a carriage barn, and the other (#33) the detached kitchen wing of the house at the corner of Ellsworth St. The rest of the structures from this period are built in an unadorned post-Victorian style typical of any outlying workers' neighborhood in the city.

The old Black Rock Auxiliary School (above, c. 1900 and below, as it appears today), once an outdated structure, has been converted for residential use.



The old carriage factory (5-7 Calderwood Court) also was adapted for residential use in the early 20th century.

BRIDGEPORT NEIGHBORHOOD 1920 - 1960

The need for housing diminished in Black Rock as the city's population stabilized somewhat after World War I. The last of the old businesses, coal yards and fish markets, left the harborfront. Their places were taken by prestigious yacht clubs such as Fayerweather, Bridgeport, and Black Rock Yacht Clubs which attracted a new class of people to the rundown port.

Grovers Hill replaced Seaside Park as the home of Bridgeport's elite at this time, and the middle class was not long in claiming the adjoining territory. Builders like Carl Anderson put up hundreds of medium priced English, Dutch, California, and American-Colonial-style houses. A feverish boom period resulted until the Depression put an end to the prosperous '20s.

Black Rock became established as one of Bridgeport's top residential districts, and successfully survived the 1950s' flight to the suburbs. The high quality of its buildings: (many houses built in poorer times were upgraded during this period), its feeling of community spirit and separate identity (only one major road ties it to the rest of Bridgeport) and its general physical attractiveness have helped to stabilize the neighborhood.

Stopping Point:
BARTRAM AVE. This block is one of the most pleasant in the entire city, an expression of 1920s urban aspirations. It was laid out by the Bartram family, descendants of a wealthy West India merchant, whose homestead (erected 1801) can be seen at the opposite end of the street. The old Black Rock Congregational Church was located on the northwest corner of Ellsworth St., and huge elm trees (note the spaces remaining in the sidewalks) formed an arcade to the Bartram House. The setback of each house enhanced an open, spacious feeling and added focus to the landmarks at either end.

Bartram Ave. in 1934.

CURRENT TRENDS 1960 - PRESENT

Black Rock began to feel some unwelcome changes in the 1960s. Investors began eyeing old homesteads surrounded by large pieces of land for the development of apartment houses and condominiums. Because residential complexes have for the most part been excluded from the suburbs, attention has been focused on still-appealing city neighborhoods like Black Rock to provide housing for those who do not wish to own a house. Zoning battles have been fought in recent years by those who wish to preserve the area's "character."

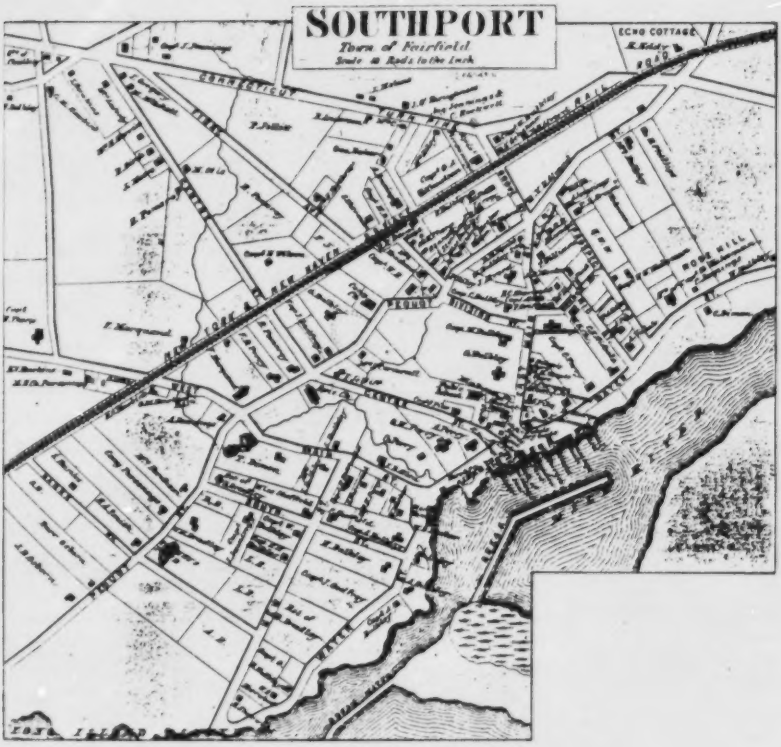
An historic district has been proposed as part of the Bicentennial celebration which would protect the major part of the old village. A vote of the property owners probably will take place late in 1977. In addition, a newly formed Black Rock Community Council is exploring means of maintaining the neighborhood's unique character.

Stopping Point:
ELLSWORTH FIELD, now a public playground, was once the site of the 18th century Capt. Caleb Brewster homestead.

B20. HARBOR HOUSE APARTMENTS (1965), 15 Ellsworth St. This was the first large apartment house to be built in what had been an area of one and two family homes.

B21. FAYERWEATHER TOWERS CONDOMINIUMS (1972), 155 Brewster St. A new concept in housing was brought to Black Rock with the construction of this building. Although somewhat out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood, the highrise structure offers spectacular views of the harbor and has become a much sought after address.

The harborfront site of the 1807 Uriah Bulkley House (moved to 89 Grovers Ave.) is now occupied by the Fayerweather Towers Condominium.



SOUTHPORT

Despite similar origins, Southport today looks very different from Black Rock. Here one can feel immersed in a virtual stage set from the 19th century, a place where some of the finest architecture and streetscape design produced in early America continues to resist intrusion.

Southport seems always to have led a charmed existence. Its harbor is small and shallow, but this did not limit the horizons of the early merchants and sea captains. The world was their marketplace, and a home here was often by choice rather than economic necessity. In the early Victorian period summer visitors from New York, Philadelphia and other large cities began to arrive. They were intent on maintaining the status quo and preventing the emergence here of the manufacturing economy they had left behind.

The 20th century saw a continuation of the drive to preserve the village's simple charms as wealthy business and professional families, able to live where they pleased due to a good transportation network, chose a Southport address. The village was one of the earliest designated historic districts in the state, and its future seems as assured as its past.

FARM COMMUNITY 1661-1800

Unlike Black Rock, Southport's existence as an independent center did not begin until more than a century after its first settlement. The land west of the Mill River was farm country, with a minimum of shipping activity and a gristmill.

First notice of the exceptional fertility of this area by white settlers was probably made at the time of the Great Swamp Fight in 1637. This battle, which was reputedly fought at a site along the Old Post Rd. just west of the Penn Central tracks, brought soldiers from Massachusetts Bay and the Connecticut Valley to defeat the Pequot Indians, the last major threat to English settlement of the coast. Some of these men returned to the area in 1639 to settle the towns of Fairfield, Milford, and Stratford.

The local Indians relinquished their claims to Southport in 1661 for "13 coats, 2 yards a piece, and ye rest in wampum". A small reservation was left for their use at Rose Hill until 1703. The minutes of the Town Meeting for 20 January, 166 1state that "The Towne hath this day ordered that whereas it appears that many inhabitants of the Towne want land for a present improvement, the Towne hath voted that there shall be a new planting field or fields laid out over the Mill River . . ."

The early farmers of Sasqua (Southport) were noted for their wealth. Hundreds of horses and cattle were pastured in the meadows next to the salt marshes, and salt hay was readily available for winter fodder. Oats, rye and corn, both for local consumption and for barter, were ground at Perry's Mill on the Mill River starting in 1662. At least 80% of Fairfield's population in the late 17th century were farmers; the average farm consisted of 75 to 200 acres.

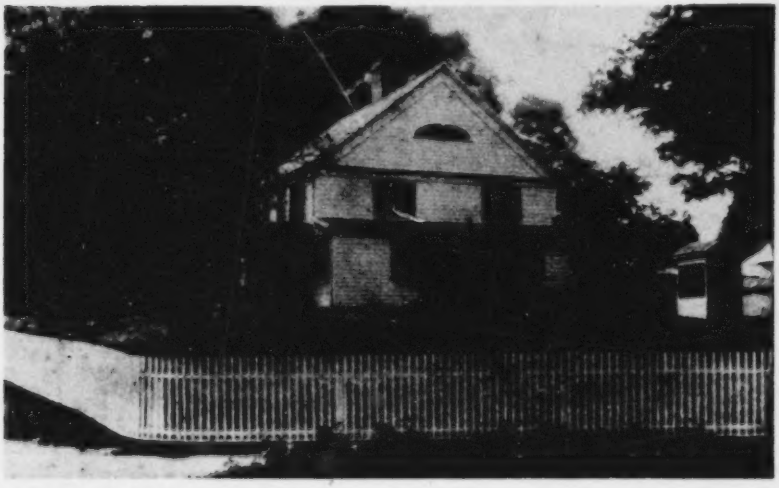
Like Black Rock, Southport (or Mill River, as it was then known) began to grow into a village around 1760. Although the harbor was considerably smaller, it was still of sufficient depth to handle ships of up to 100 tons. A shipyard was started in 1763, and the one surviving house facing the river suggests that the beginning of the community dates from this time. There was a growing demand for imported goods (including

luxuries such as tea, sugar, and East India spices) in a wealthy provincial town like Fairfield; local residents found new vocations as merchants, sea captains and ship owners, thus diversifying the economy.

The British largely obliterated the fledgling port when they attacked Fairfield during the Revolution. On July 8, 1779 they burned "8 houses and outbuildings, destroying furniture and whatever they could lay their hands on." Only one building is known to have survived the conflagration, and it was some years before the village regained even a modest degree of prosperity.

Stopping Point:
The MILL RIVER WATERFRONT was the birthplace of Southport. Along the present Harbor Rd., laid out in the 17th century, stood most of the early homes which were destroyed in 1779.

S1. WILLIAM BULKLEY HOUSE (circa 1760), 824 Harbor Rd. This house, almost certainly the oldest now standing on Southport Harbor, was erected prior to 1766. It is of an 18th century type called a "three-quarter house" (four bays across the front instead of the usual five). It was remodeled in the Federal period, probably upon its purchase by David Banks in 1816. A fan window was installed in the attic gable and the elaborate cornice with triglyph ornamentation was added. Victorian embellishments were removed when the house was recently restored.



William Bulkley House (824 Harbor Rd.), Southport's only surviving pre-Revolutionary homestead on the harbor as it appeared at the turn of the century.

COASTING PORT 1800-1831

Southport awakened with the birth of the Federal era. Families that had been burned out of Fairfield center during the Revolution gave serious consideration to rebuilding their shops and dwellings in what was sure to become an influential place of trade.

A 19th century history reported that as late as 1796 only 8 houses stood in Mill River village. In October 1799 it was voted "... that a lottery be granted by the General Assembly for the purpose of sinking the channel of Mill River Harbor ..." By that year a sloop sailed regularly to Boston, and 10 vessels were registered in the port. Four small shipyards were operating by 1803, and the harbor was periodically dredged by oxen.

The embargoes and the War of 1812 had as disastrous an effect on Mill River's shipping as on Black Rock's. A small earthwork known as "Fort Defense" was thrown up at the mouth of the harbor to defend the port. Many locally owned boats were destroyed or captured by the enemy — the "Rising Sun" was burned, the "Rose" was captured and sent to Bermuda and the "Filanda" was captured and sent to Halifax.

However, the village's fortunes began to increase after the war. The inner breakwater, reputedly the first one ever constructed at government expense, was built in 1815. By 1825 Mill River had 20 buildings, and

Nineteenth century view of Main St. looking toward the harbor.

1 brig, 5 schooners, and 20 sloops with a total gross tonnage of 1900 tons were owned in the village. Business was generally restricted to the coasting trade with Boston, New York, and the Carolinas. Local produce, along with New England manufactured goods, was shipped south, and raw cotton was frequently the cargo for the trip north.

Stopping Point:
This section of the HARBORFRONT began to take shape as the village's commercial district in the early 19th century. By 1830 it was lined with wharves, stores and warehouses, and Mill River began to usurp Fairfield's position as the business center of the town.

These early commercial storehouses occupied the site of Perry Park along Harbor Rd.

S2. OLD STOREHOUSES (early 19th century), 789 and 825 Harbor Rd. These two buildings now remodeled and converted to residences are reminders of a time when this part of the harborfront was totally devoted to marine commerce. 789 served as a clubhouse for both the Bachelor's Comfort and Married Men's Relief and Pequot Yacht Clubs.

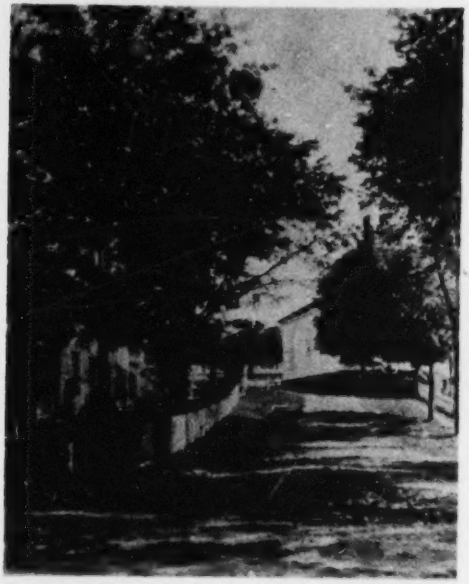
S3. GURDON PERRY HOUSE (circa 1830), 780 Harbor Rd. This house is typical of a wealthy merchant's home in the first part of the 19th century. Its stateliness is enhanced by the long setback from the road, but its architecture lacks the pretension of houses of the same class built a few years later.

S4. AUSTIN PERRY HOUSE (circa 1830), 712 Harbor Rd. Originally this was a simple Federal-style merchant's home across the road from the warehouses. The Corinthian portico, one of the finest of its type on an American house, was probably added in the 1840s. These two houses with 750 in between (built in 1837 at a cost of $5000 on the site of the original 18th century Perry homestead) form a Neo-Classic composition unparalleled in Fairfield County, an Acropolis of Southport.

SHIPPERS' BOROUGH 1831-1854

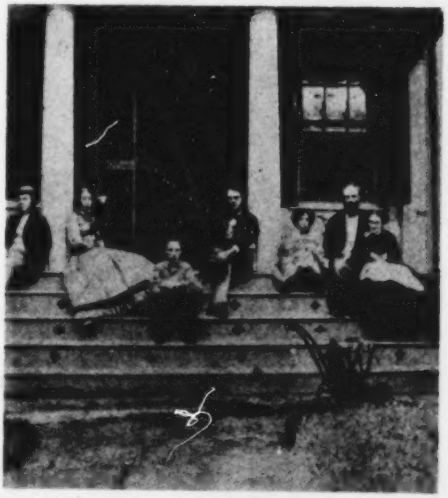
Many towns can point to a single year during which the impetus for growth overcame the inertia of the status quo. Fairfield can trace its emergence back to the town plan of 1639; Bridgeport became a major contender for the trading center of the region after the downtown streets were laid out in 1795, and Black Rock started its most important period of development after the town wharf and street improvements of 1802. In 1831, the combination of several important factors opened an era of explosive growth for Southport that lasted for almost 20 years.

1831 is the year Mill River village was incorporated as "The Warden, Burgesses, & Freemen of the Borough of Southport". The new form of government was thought necessary in order to better regulate fire protection, stray animal impoundment, road construction, collection of shellfish, and seaweed (used as fertilizer). As the new commercial center, Southport was flexing political muscle, perhaps taking a first step toward independence from Fairfield.



Looking up Church St. to the old Methodist-Episcopal Church (demolished 1897-8). A corner of the Old Academy (95 Main St.) can be seen at left.

In that same year the Federal Government allocated $10,000 for the construction of the outer breakwater, necessitated by the rapidly increasing number of wharves in the harbor. A Mill River branch of Bridgeport's Connecticut Bank was opened which two years later moved to the pillared brick building which is now 227 Main St.



Oliver Perry's imposing Greek Revival mansion, built in 1837, reflects the prosperity of village shipowners before the Civil War. At the right, an 1850's portrait of Oliver Perry and his family on the side porch of their home.

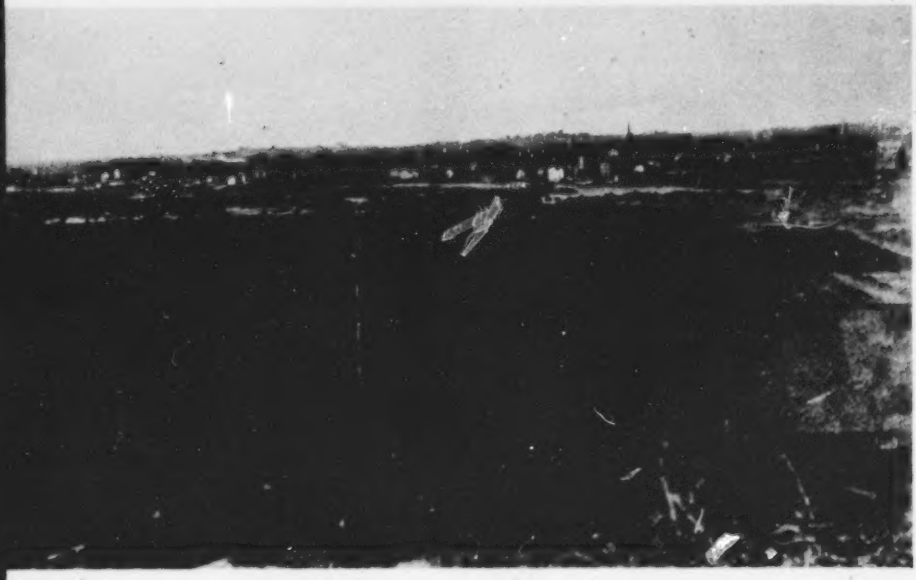
The growth continued. By 1838, 60 to 70 buildings were standing in Southport, 3 times the number of 10 years before. Eight stores, a post office, a church, and an academy completed the village. It was estimated that "more shipping was owned in Southport in proportion to its size than any other port between Boston and New York." Shipowners invested wisely, and several Southport residents acquired fleets of vessels that never entered Southport, but sailed from New York to ports in Europe, South America, and the Far East.

Onion fields, which once covered the slopes of Sasco Hill, provided a major source of income for the town. Below, workers loading onions into barrels in the late 19th century. At right, market boats carried onions to New York City and returned with fertilizer for local farms.

Money was also made in the market-boat trade originating out of Southport. Local produce — corn, flour, meat, fruit and potatoes — was sent to New York, and loads of stable manure and rock fertilizer were shipped back to Southport. Boats also went to Perth Amboy for coal and to Albany for lumber and delivered these materials to other ports up the New England coast.

Onion farming, which was to become the mainstay of the town for the remainder of the century, began large-scale production around 1840. It is interesting to note that, while many of the great fortunes of Boston and Providence were made from the profits of the China trade, those of Salem from the East Indies trade and those of New Bedford, Nantucket and Stonington from whaling and sealing, a good deal of Southport's 19th century prosperity was due to this lowly vegetable.

The onion plant was ideally suited to the fertile soil of Southport, Greenfield, and Greens Farms. A labor-intensive crop, it needed constant weeding and careful handling. Local farmers developed the now common "globe-shape" onion to replace the old saucer-shape in order to facilitate shipment. Because of its fine quality this product always brought a top price at the New York market. The average amount paid to local growers was $1 to $3 per barrel. In Southport onions were cured in sheds rather than in the open field to maintain their perfect color. Around 1860, at the peak of productivity, an estimated 100,000 bushels were shipped from the harbor, and Southport reigned as the "Onion Capital of America."



During the Civil War, the Federal Government contracted with local farmers to provide onions for the Union Army to help prevent scurvy among the troops. One resident at the time related that "On sailing days, the streets of the village would be almost impassable from the lines of ox and horse carts loaded with produce waiting their turn at the boat . . ."

The railroad between New Haven and New York was completed in 1848. Although a station was built here, the new major market terminals were located in Norwalk and Bridgeport which caused a decline in Southport's commerce. At about this same time major steam boat lines came

The Trinity Church Rectory (678 Pequot Ave.) is one of two Southport houses built in the 1830s with five columns rather than the more usual four or six columns.

into prominence on the Sound, but Southport's harbor proved too small to accommodate them. Agitation for complete separation from Fairfield, voiced throughout the early '40s, was heard no more, and the borough government itself was disbanded in 1854.

Stopping Point:

THE SQUARE, corner Main St. and Harbor Rd. This intersection was once Southport's business center. The surviving old structures give only faint clues to the former character of the bustling waterfront.

55. PEQUOT YACHT CLUB (circa 1835), 669 Harbor Rd. Now virtually unrecognizable as such, this building was once a warehouse dating from the port's commercial heyday. A third story was lost in the most recent remodeling. This building was the first home of the Jelliff Manufacturing Company, relocated to Pequot Ave. in 1907.

The Southport National Bank (227 Main St.), erected in 1833.

S6. JENNINGS STORE BUILDING (1834 and later; portions possibly much earlier), 668-70 Harbor Rd. This structure's main section housed one of the town's first general stores and the first post office. In the Victorian era the mansard roof and contemporary shop windows were added. At that time the second floor was occupied by the Southport Reading Room, predecessor of the Pequot Library.

S7. SOUTHPORT NATIONAL BANK (1833), 227 Main St. Now a private residence, this transitional Federal-Greek Revival style building was originally a branch of the Connecticut Bank of Bridgeport, becoming an independent institution in 1851.

Southport's original Congregational Church (1842-74) was built on the site of the present church. Above is an 1880 group portrait of the men's Bible class.

GARDEN VILLAGE 1854-1900

Southport's ante-bellum economy was based on New York shipping interests and local truck garden produce, so there was no decline similar to Black Rock's when its shipbuilding industry collapsed in the later Victorian period. Southport was close enough to New York and yet far enough from industrial Bridgeport to attract wealthy new residents. Many who had moved to New York or had Southport roots returned summers seeking the solace of an old-fashioned village.

Trinity Episcopal Church, rebuilt in 1862, was a triumph of "Carpenter's Gothic" architecture.

Mention should be made of the town's institutions which either came into being or were expanded during this era. Two churches, both of which had opened their doors during the boom years of the '30s and '40s, constructed new Victorian edifices. The wooden Trinity Episcopal Church was built in 1854 using an early Gothic style. Destroyed by a tornado in 1862, it was rebuilt immediately in an almost identical design. Not to be outdone, the Southport Congregational Church erected its present stone building in 1875, replacing a simple Greek Revival meeting house built in 1841.

The *Southport Chronicle*, a monthly newspaper, started publication in 1867. Dealing largely with social news, its pages contain fascinating in-

sights into Victorian life reflecting the fears of a time when industrialization and urbanization were making major changes in American life. In Southport there was anxiety about these changes and a resistance to them, as in many other small towns in America.

An 1868 editorial asks:

"What shall be done with those lazy, dirty, thieving 'bummers' that daily go tramping through our village? Two days ago we counted some 15 or 20 of them . . . Their ostensible business is begging but their real object is to steal . . .

. . . The young men of the village should form an 'Anti-Bummer Association' and horsewhip every tramp found within the limits of Southport."

Building activity in the village was constantly described as in this 1867 story:

"Notwithstanding the high price of materials, a good deal of building and remodeling has been going on this season. Messrs. Jelliff and Northrup say they have their hands full, and work engaged a long way ahead. The French roof seems to be all the rage. Captain Wade was the first to try it. Mrs. Wakeman has nearly completed her French roof palace, and Captain Godfrey has put the same kind of roof on each of his dwellings . . ."

Social mores were also targets for editorials:

"Sociableness in our village is at a fearful discount. Twenty years ago and less you could hardly find a more social place. Nobody just 'drops in' any more, all invitations are formal . . . People are too concerned with what is 'fashionable' . . . Children grow up too quickly. Girls . . . adopt as much false hair and probably more false

The Trinity Church Parish House as it appeared with its original dark color scheme.

airs than their mothers . . . Boys . . . think they know more than their fathers and grandfathers together . . . In times past young ladies and gentlemen did not have to be so careful about being seen together for fear of being reported engaged."

Another article gives a possible insight into the reasons for Southport's failure to attract any major industries:

"We hear it reported that a company recently offered $4,000 for the lot of 8 acres opposite Hawkins' grocery. They intended to build there a rubber manufactory, the location just suiting for that purpose. About 300 hands would have been employed. Of course they could not buy even at that price, for we Southporters seem determined to keep out anything that will build up the place."

There are accounts of Southport residents taking the train to Saratoga or yachting to Newport in the late '60s and '70s.

"William Nichols, Esq. of Brooklyn will soon bring into our harbor his new yacht. She is about 60 feet in length, a perfect gem of a craft, and will take down anything in the yacht line ever seen in Southport."

The Sasquanaug Association for Village Improvements was founded by a group of influential women of the town in the 1880s. They pressed for parks, sidewalks, the elimination of eyesores, and other civic improvements. An article in the *Chronicle* gives an example of their efforts:

"We have petitioned the Legislature in regard to the unloading at our wharves and carting through our streets of evil smelling fertilizer. A Committee . . . went to Hartford and testified as to their experience . . . A bill restricting such unloading and carting to the colder months of the year was passed."

The Sasquanaug Association also was responsible for having the first flagstone sidewalks installed in the village, replacing the often muddy or dusty dirt pathways and later, the first gas lampposts for nighttime illumination.

The heirs of Frederick Marquand donated the magnificent Richardson Romanesque Pequot Library building to the citizens of Southport. It had been designed by a former student of H. H. Richardson in 1894. Located at the intersection of Westway and Pequot Roads, it was built at the

The Pequot Library.

western extremity of the village, by that time the most modern as well as exclusive part of town. Several fine "shingle style" mansions from the '80s and '90s survive in the immediate vicinity.

Market boats continued to ply the harbor throughout the 19th century, although on a diminishing scale. Due to blight and a lack of crop rotation, the onion trade was in its death throes by the century's end. Southport continued to be the commercial center of the town of Fairfield, but the business district was beginning to move north, away from the harbor.

At the far left, an interior view of the Pequot Library reading room in its early days.

The old Italian style Pequot School (built 1855).

The harbor business district as it appeared in the late 19th century. At the lower left, looking up Harbor Rd. are the present buildings of the Pequot Yacht Club, renovated to fit Victorian taste. Below, looking down Main St. to the old storehouse which has had an Italian Renaissance "false front" attached.

At the bottom, ice was cut from ponds near Southport and distributed locally.

Disbrow's store was located on Main Street just west of the Pequot School.

Stopping Point:

MAIN STREET, which connected the harbor with the old Stage Rd., (Boston Post Rd.) evolved in the Victorian period as the finest street in town for suburban residences built on a grand scale.

S8. HALL BLOCK and CHRONICLE BUILDINGS (1894), 244 and 252 Main St. These former tenements originally housed stores and offices on their ground floors. Both were converted into elegant apartment houses in the 1950s.

S9. SOUTHPORT SAVINGS BANK (1865), 226 Main St. Opened in 1854, this bank was able to erect its own building in 1864 after renting space for several years. The building contract called for the structure to be "furnished in a similar style with the Danbury bank building" and "the roof pitch to be like the Episcopal Church. All brick work to be the best hand burnt brick and will be laid in the best sand and lime mortar. Cut stone work, front and rear, to be of the best quality Portland stone — floors of the best quality Norway pine". This bank and the bank across the street, constituted the only financial institutions in Fairfield. Merger with the Peoples Savings Bank of Bridgeport took place in 1955.

The Southport Savings Bank (226 Main St.) was built across the street from the National Bank in 1864-65.

Below is the Hall Block with announcements of coming events posted in the windows.

S10. OLIVER BULKLEY HOUSE (1859), 176 Main St. What is probably Fairfield's best example of an ante-bellum Gothic villa is still surrounded by harmonious landscaping. The square tower was added in the '80s, and the original paint color probably would not have been white. Now a private residence, this house became the "Pequot Inn" for summer boarders in the 1920s.

S11. CHARLES M. GILMAN HOUSE (1873), 139 Main St. Built for a prominent Bridgeport attorney, this house is an unusual combination of Italianate and Gothic-Stick styles.

BUTTER, CHEESE, FLOUR,
FRUITS, ETC., A SPECIALTY.
WATER ST. SOUTHPORT, CONN.

GO TO
CHARLES OEHMICHEN
FOR YOUR ROLLS, TWIST,
BOILED, AND GRAHAM
BREAD, CAKES, AND
PIES, FRESH
EVERY MORNING.
GENUINE GERMAN RYE BREAD
A SPECIALTY.

DRY AND FANCY GOODS
Best Quality and Latest Designs
AT BRIDGEPORT PRICES.
Mrs. George Elwood.
POST-OFFICE BLOCK.

J. V. RYDER & SON
Ice Cream, Temperance Drinks, Bread,
Cake, Pies, Cigars and Confectionery.
MEALS SERVED AT SHORT
NOTICE.
Ice-cream Wholesale and Retail.
Sole Agents for
TABOR, JOHNSON & CO'S
Standard Watches, Chains, Diamonds
Etc.
East Main Street, Southport, Conn

K. J. DAMTOFT,
DRUGGIST AND CHEMIST,
SUNDAY HOURS
8:30 TO 10 A. M.
4 TO 6 P. M.
SOUTHPORT, CONN.
You can save money by calling

Businesses flourished in the harborfront area before the new center developed along the trolley line. The Southport Chronicle, May 4, 1893.

Below is the Gothic style Southport railroad station as it appeared in the late 19th century, showing the First Congregational Church in the background.

This ornate Gothic villa (176 Main St.) was built by Oliver Bulkley in 1859.

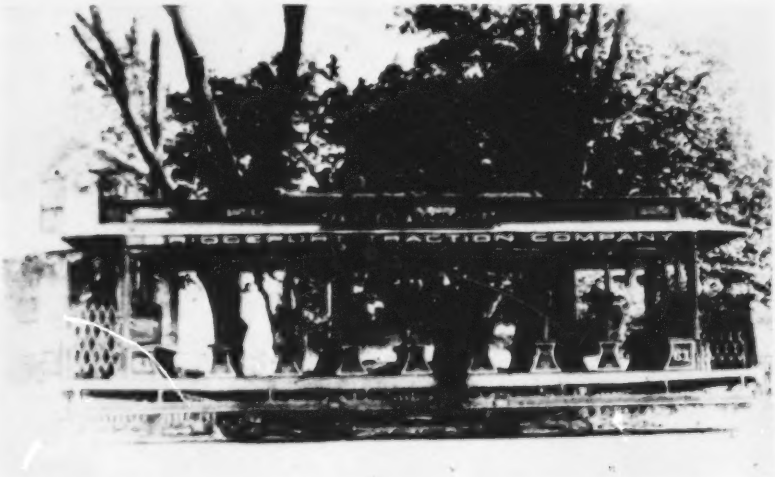
AFFLUENT SUBURB 1900-1940

The trolley line reached Southport in 1894, following closely the telephone and gas lines and preceding electric lines by only a few years. By 1900 the town was no longer an isolated seaport, but rather was becoming a fine residential suburb and an attractive shipping center for the owners of the new estates being built atop Sasco Hill and along the shore in Greens Farms. The last market boat left the port in 1903; soon afterwards the Pequot Yacht Club took over as the harbor's center of interest.

A few foreign residents had diluted Southport's Anglo-Saxon population by the turn of the century. The Irish began settling in the town by 1850, and were followed around 1880 by new arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe. The *Fairfield Advertiser* reported that "Twenty-seven Italians arrived in town and took up their residence in Hall's Block. Their presence is known to the citizens largely by a little girl selling pin wheels adorned with 'elegant' rosettes. Her conversation is somewhat limited. But she can say 5 cents and take up the same sum

when offered." As in most New England towns, the new immigrants received only limited acceptance at first.

Precipitated by the trolley line as in Black Rock, a new business center soon sprouted at the intersection of Pequot Ave. and Main St. Where only a livery stable and scattered small houses had been before, a drug store, telephone exchange, grocery, and eventually the village post office and fire department replaced the old Harbor Rd. commercial center in short order. The Jelliff Manufacturing Company, which had its origins in the 1880s manufacturing onion seed sieves, located its wire goods manufactory there in 1907, providing jobs for scores of employees. New workers' houses joined those already in existence.

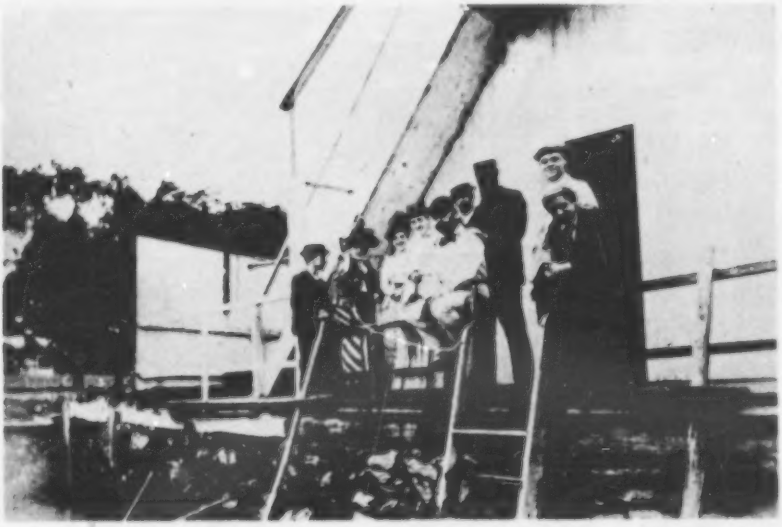


The trolley car was responsible for major changes in Southport, connecting it with the larger cities of Bridgeport and Norwalk.

Stopping Point:
The INTERSECTION of PEQUOT AVE. and MAIN ST. Southport's "new" center contains small specialty shops that date from the beginning of the 20th century.

S12. OLD ACADEMY (1827), 95 Main St. This building is a prime example of adaptive reuse in the village. Originally a private school, it was used for Borough meetings between 1831 and 1854. In 1828 Southport's first church services (Episcopal) were held here. It was turned into a dwelling in the late 19th century, and was renovated in the early 20th (note the new side chimney).

The new center of Southport at the close of the 19th century. "Carey's Corner", now the site of Switzer's Drug Store, was one of the early businesses in the new center. Below, the site of the Alvord House in the foreground is now occupied by a gasoline service station.



"Bachelor's Comfort and Married Men's Retreat", a social club, took over one of the onion warehouses in the early 1900s; pictured are some bachelors. The last of the market boat fleet was phased out in 1905.

S13. SOUTHPORT GROCERY (circa 1850), 342 Pequot Ave. This building is an example of an early Victorian house refitted for the needs of business as this neighborhood changed from rural-residential to commercial with the coming of the trolley line.

S14. C. O. JELLIFF MANUFACTURING COMPANY (1907), 354 Pequot Ave. A standard New England mill building, built in this part of town to take advantage of the good transportation facilities, which included the adjacent New Haven Railroad.

S15. LIVERY STABLE (circa 1850), 362 Pequot Ave. Another old building with a new life (as an antique shop), this was one of the few non-residential buildings in the old Boston Post Rd. area.

Oliver Bulkley's Gothic mansion became an inn in the 1920s.

MODERN SOUTHPORT 1940-PRESENT

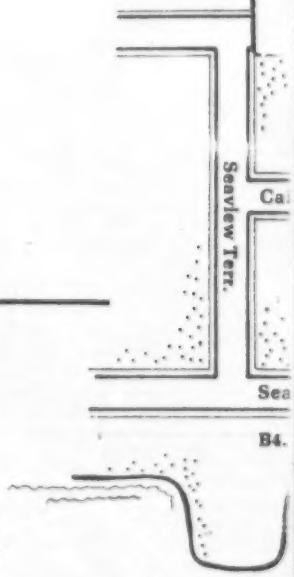
Southport's "charmed existence" continues, thanks to stringent zoning regulations and a concerned populace. Changes in the appearance of the village always seem to enhance its charm — such as the renovation of brick tenement blocks in the old center as luxury apartments in the late 1950s. The village's outstanding concentration of early American architecture was officially recognized in 1966 when it became a State Historic District and later when it was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

There have been zoning problems to be sure — a condominium development on Pequot Ave., for example, was constructed despite fierce local opposition. In general, however, Southport's position as the most prestigious address along the Fairfield County Gold Coast seems safe for the future.

Stopping Point:
PEQUOT AVE. epitomizes Southport in the affluent automobile age. Houses along this street include lovingly maintained Greek Revival and Victorian homesteads, small workers' cottages renovated into townhouses, and a compatible sprinkling of new construction.

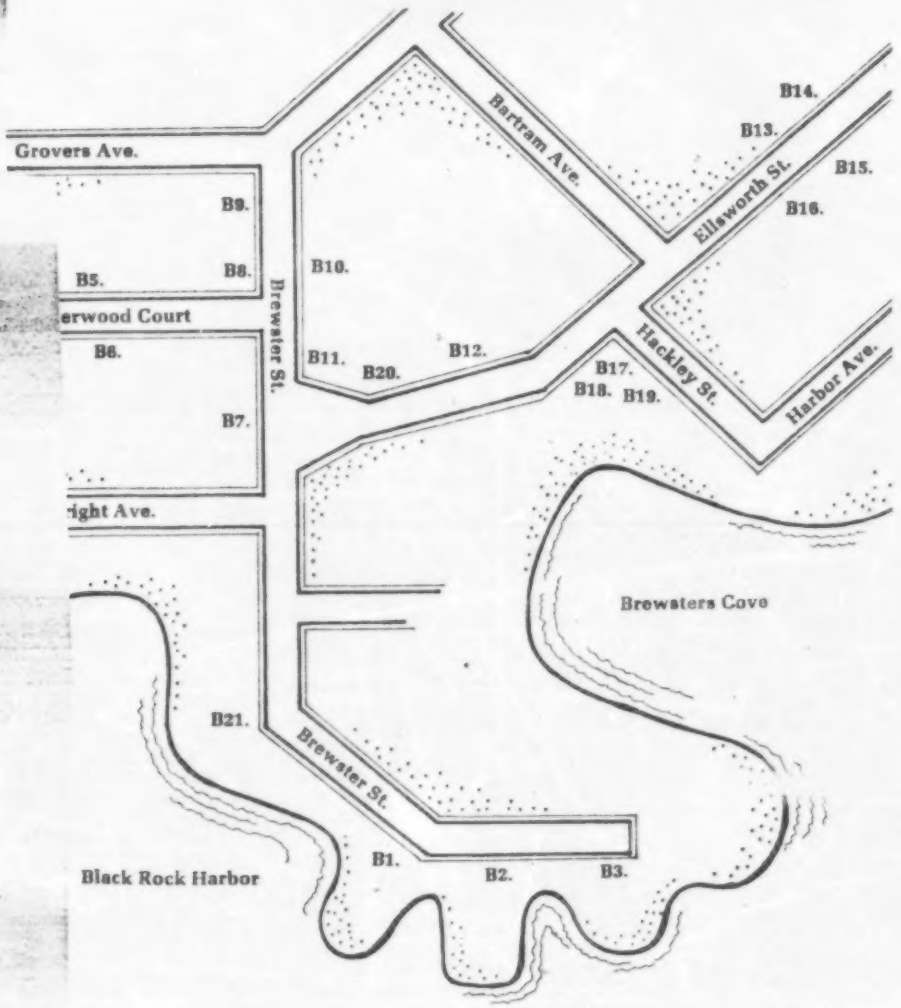
516. PEQUOT MEWS CONDOMINIUMS (1971), intersection Pequot Ave. and Chester Place. These structures are built in a modern adaptation of Colonial-Greek Revival style and represent an entirely new concept in Southport home ownership.

Southport Harbor at the turn of the century and today.



BLACK ROCK

B1. PORT 5 YACHT CLUB
B2. FAYERWEATHER YACHT CLUB
B3. HEZEKIAH OSBORN HOUSE
B4. WOLCOTT CHAUNCY HOUSE
B5. CARRIAGE FACTORY
B6. WILLIAM BOUTON HOUSE
B7. CAPTAIN THOMAS RANSOM HOUSE
B8. DAVID SMITH HOUSE
B9. GEORGE PALMER HOUSE
B10. BLACK ROCK SCHOOL
B11. WILLIAM WHEELER BOUNDSTONE
B12. CAPTAIN WILLIAM HALL HOUSE
B13. CAPTAIN CHARLES ALLEN
and ISAAC JONES HOUSES
B14. STURGES SEELEY HOUSE
B15. ELIPHALET WALKER HOUSE
B16. OLIVER BURR HOUSE
B17. ARTHUR SMITH HOUSE
B18. GEORGE GOULD HOUSE
B19. HENRY BUNCE HOUSE
B20. HARBOR HOUSE APARTMENTS
B21. FAYERWEATHER TOWERS CONDOMINIUMS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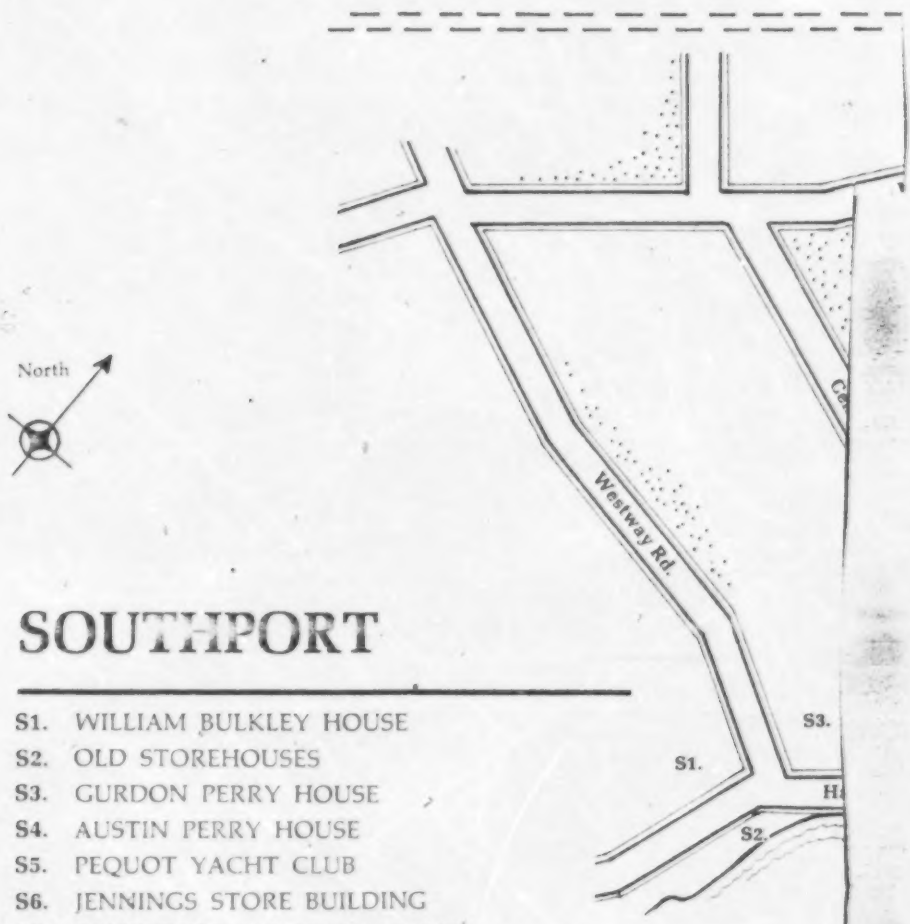
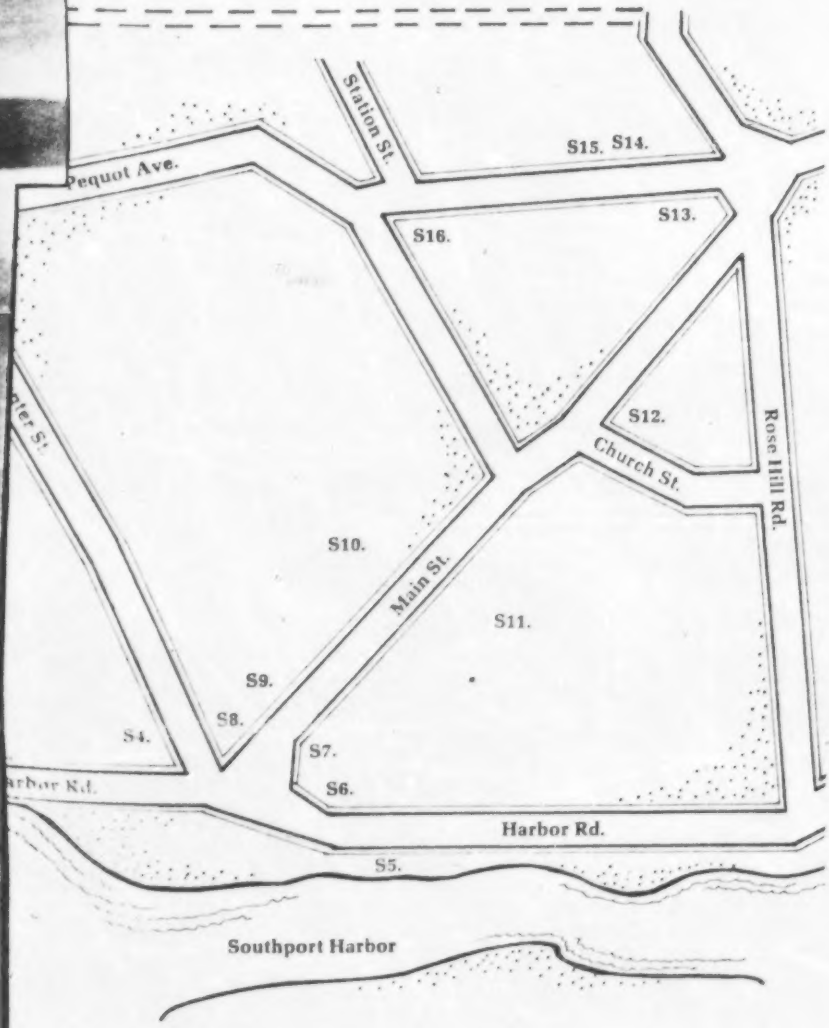
Bertram Ave.
B10.
B11.
B20.
B12.
B14.
B13.
Ellsworth St.
B15.
B16.
Hackley St.
B17.
B18.
B19.
Harbor Ave.
Brewsters Cove
B21.
Brewster St.
B1.
B2.
B3.
Black Rock Harbor



SOUTHPORT

S1. WILLIAM BULKLEY HOUSE
S2. OLD STOREHOUSES
S3. GURDON PERRY HOUSE
S4. AUSTIN PERRY HOUSE
S5. PEQUOT YACHT CLUB
S6. JENNINGS STORE BUILDING
S7. SOUTHPORT NATIONAL BANK
S8. HALL BLOCK and CHRONICLE BUILDINGS
S9. SOUTHPORT SAVINGS BANK
S10. OLIVER BULKLEY HOUSE
S11. CHARLES M. GILMAN HOUSE
S12. OLD ACADEMY
S13. SOUTHPORT GROCERY
S14. C. O. JELLIFF MANUFACTURING COMPANY
S15. LIVERY STABLE
S16. PEQUOT MEWS CONDOMINIUMS


Station St.
S15. S14.
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S13.
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S12.
Rose Hill Rd.
Church St.
S10.
Main St.
S11.
S9.
S8.
S4.
S7.
S6.
Harbor Rd.
S5.
Southport Harbor